

REMARKSClaim Status

Claims 1-7, 9-12, 14-18 and 21 are pending in the application. Claims 1-6 have been withdrawn. This paper amends claims 7, 9, 12 and 14, and cancels claims 8, 13, and 19-20. This paper also submits a new claim 21. Of the claims that are not withdrawn, claims 7 and 12 are the independent claims of the application.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

In response to the rejection of claims 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, this paper cancels those claims

In response to the rejection of claims 7-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph this paper amends independent claims 7 and 12 to eliminate the phrases “true proprietary part numbers” and “true part numbers”, given the limited use of these phrases in the patent application as filed. Instead, these claims refer to “other numbers”, a term that first appears in the phrase “other numbers than the first set of proprietary part numbers”. This terminology has a clear meaning and finds support at page 14, lines 4-18 of the application. Dependent claims 9 and 14 are amended for consistency with this amended terminology in claims 7 and 12.

Other aspects of the amendment of independent claims 7 and 12 are discussed immediately below.

Amendments of Independent Claims 7 and 12

Besides the amendment of claims 7 and 12 to refer to “other numbers than the first set of proprietary part numbers”, these claims now recite that the first set of proprietary part numbers is provided by the user. This feature is found for example at pages 13-14 of the application with reference to steps 310 and 320 (Figure 3), and relates to the key aspect of the invention that the first set of proprietary part numbers is familiar to the user.

Specific ways in which the first set of proprietary part numbers may be familiar to the user are that these proprietary part numbers may be the user's own part numbers (if the user is a manufacturer or supplier of the desired part); they may be the part numbers of a frequently used supplier; or they may be numbers found in an on-line catalog. These sources of the first set of proprietary part numbers are now claimed in independent claim 12, and in new claim 21 dependent from claim 7, and find support at page 13, last paragraph of the application.

Another change to claims 7 and 12 is that the other numbers are associated with different suppliers or manufacturers. Claims 8 and 13 are canceled, and this feature formerly found in these dependent claims is now incorporated in claims 7 and 12.

Finally, the second translating step (or instructions) and the generating step (or instructions) refer to at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user. This is exemplified for example by step 340 at page 14 of the application in the method of Figure 3.

Art Rejections

Claims 7-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hinckley (US 2002/0055886 A1). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Hinckley does not disclose or suggest the recited features of independent claim 7, at least with respect to the steps of

translating said other numbers into at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user; and

generating shipping papers or electronic records using the at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user translated from the other numbers that summarizes a transaction involving the one or more parts.

The typical function of part numbers is to serve as catalog numbers for parts, for example as designations used by customers to order parts without reference to whether the customers recognize or are familiar with the part numbers. As discussed at pages 2-3 of the application, in some commercial settings customers tend to rely on other product-identification information than the part numbers, such as product descriptions, in order that the customers know what parts they are ordering.

However in other commercial settings, the part numbers may serve a secondary function of identifying a type of part without reference to separate identifying information. The method and apparatus of the invention are particularly useful in that setting.

In considering the features of claim 7 quoted above, one should consider how the user originally provides the first set of proprietary part numbers. As to Applicant's step of "receiving a

first document including a first set of proprietary part numbers from a client workstation, said first set of proprietary part numbers provided by a user of said client workstation”, Hinckley discloses that the user of his component exchange system may be a component buyer (CB) or trader, among other possibilities. A key goal of Hinckley’s system is to permit a user representing a Device Manufacturer (DM) to input an Internal Part Number (IPN) and for transactions to facilitate searching for components that are compatible with the requirements of the IPN. The IPN is a type of proprietary part number (in Applicant’s nomenclature). However, Hinckley does not disclose the general method in which a user inputs proprietary part numbers that are familiar to the user, and in which the component exchange system uses these proprietary part numbers as familiar identifiers in reports back to the user translated from other numbers identifying parts involved in the transaction.

Thus as noted above with reference to page 13 of the present application, Applicant’s method and apparatus permit a user to provide a first set of proprietary part numbers that may be the user’s own part numbers (if the user is a manufacturer or supplier of the desired part), may be the part numbers of a frequently used supplier, or may be numbers found in an on-line catalog. (These sources of the first set of proprietary part numbers are recited in new dependent claim 21). While Hinckley discloses the use of IPNs which can be considered “the user’s own part numbers”, Hinckley does not disclose tracking other types of proprietary part numbers input by a user throughout a transaction for the purpose of using these proprietary part numbers as familiar part designations when reporting back data in that transaction as to other parts that are normally identified by “other numbers” (i.e. Hinckley’s MPNs).

As to the step of “translating said other numbers into at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user”, the Office action cites page 7, [0083] and especially the passage beginning “the MCR module may match all records...”. This paragraph discusses limiting the type of searches enabled by Hinckley’s component exchange system, in particular limiting what users can perform searches “to capture data indicating different trading partners’ IPNs linked to the same MPN”. Thus, the passage discussing the matching performed by the MCR module explains that the system may return a listing of unique IPN, CBs identification data, MPN, and manufacturer identification data corresponding to input IPN/CB identification data combinations. This is not a teaching of translating “other numbers” that identify parts found available in the transaction, to a first set of proprietary part numbers that are intended as familiar part designations. That point is reinforced by the fact that in the present invention, the first set of proprietary part numbers need not be part numbers associated with the user -- i.e. they need not be numbers like Hinckley’s IPNs.

In summary, Hinckley neither teaches nor suggests the step of “translating said other numbers into at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user”, even if the proprietary part numbers are not associated with the user (i.e. the proprietary part numbers may be the part numbers of a frequently used supplier, or numbers found in an on-line catalog. See also dependent claim 21, and the corresponding limitation in independent claim 12).

As to the claim limitation “generating shipping papers or electronic records using the at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user translated from the other numbers that summarizes a transaction involving the one or more parts”, the Office action cites page 9, paragraph [0106] especially as to POs and invoices. While Hinckley discloses using the

component exchange system to generate commercial documents such as POs and invoices,

Hinckley does not require that his commercial documents use at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user, translated from the other numbers, to summarize a transaction involving the one or more parts.

The Office action notes that Hinckley describes an improvement to “enable tracking IPN links to each CS and CB account”, stating that the IPNs and MPNs represent true proprietary part numbers. However in Applicant’s step of “generating shipping papers or electronic records using the at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user...”, the at least part of the proprietary part numbers do not represent true proprietary part numbers for the “one or more parts” – the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user are not equivalent either to IPNs or to MPNs.

The Office action states that one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would have been motivated by the improvement of Hinckley to generate the second (sic) using the set of proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user. In drawing this conclusion the Office action refers to the goals of reducing procurement cycle time and improving access to comparative pricing and available inventories by tracking IPN links to each CS and CB account. However, the motivation to track IPN links to each CS and CB account would not lead the person of ordinary skill to translate “other numbers” back to the “first set of proprietary part numbers”, especially when the user is not a supplier or manufacturer as parts and the proprietary part numbers are not associated with the user.

For the reasons given above, Applicant respectfully traverses the conclusion that “it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to generate the second document using the second set of proprietary part numbers such as IPNs”. Applicant has recognized that even though the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user are not directly associated with the “one or more parts” in the shipping papers or electronic records, and in this sense may actually seem to be misleading, they still play the useful role of identifying the one or more parts in a manner familiar to the user that initiated the transaction.

Hinckley does not disclose or suggest the recited features of independent claim 12, at least with respect to the following features:

wherein each of the proprietary part numbers provided by the user is selected from the group consisting of the user’s own part numbers, part numbers of frequently used suppliers, and part numbers found in an on line catalog;

.....

translating said other numbers into at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user; and

generating shipping papers or electronic records using the at least part of the proprietary part numbers originally provided by the user translated from the other numbers that summarizes a transaction involving the one or more parts.

The arguments presented above as to the patentability of claim 7 apply as well to claim 12.

The following feature that was incorporated in a dependent claim of claim 7 is incorporated expressly in claim 12: “wherein each of the proprietary part numbers provided by

the user is selected from the group consisting of the user's own part numbers, part numbers of frequently used suppliers, and part numbers found in an on line catalog". This limitation reinforces the distinctions noted above between Applicant's first set of proprietary part numbers versus Hinckley's IPNs, and the distinction that the proprietary part numbers provided by the user need not be associated with the user.

As regards the dependent claims not discussed, these claims should be patentable over the references together with their base claims.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are patentable over the art of record, and are patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph and second paragraph. To discuss any matter pertaining to the present application, the Examiner is invited to call the practitioner of record, Steven Swernofsky, at (650) 947-0700. Having made an effort to bring the application in condition for allowance, a timely notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 13, 2009

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